



Education Alliance for a Sustainable Ontario



Background

Education Alliance for a Sustainable Ontario (EASO) is Ontario's working group on education for sustainable development, established in response to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) and the national Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives.

In Canada, Learning for a Sustainable Future (LSF) and Environment Canada, in partnership with other organizations, have initiated a series of programs in support of the UNDESD. These include establishing a National Education for Sustainable Development Expert Council (NESDEC) and provincial/territorial Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) working groups.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNDESD) runs from 2005 to 2014 with the overall goal of integrating the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

Vision/Goals

VISION

All people and ecosystems in Ontario are thriving sustainably, supported by an educated and engaged society.

MISSION

EASO will provide a forum for collaboration and leadership to advance education for thriving, diverse communities and ecosystems.

GOALS

EASO will bring together leaders in formal, informal and non-formal education to support the coordination, development and implementation of ESD policies, curricula, materials/resources and teacher education.

EASO focuses on three key areas:

Socio-Cultural

- human rights
- peace & human security
- justice
- gender equality
- cultural diversity & intercultural understanding
- community and culture
- health

Environmental

- natural resources
- climate change
- rural transformation
- sustainable urbanization
- disaster prevention and mitigation
- HIV/AIDS
- governance
- demographics
- equity and rights

Economic

- poverty reduction
- corporate responsibility & accountability
- market economy
- energy efficiency & conservation
- consumption & waste management
- economic performance
- agricultural viability
- resource – mining, forestry, hydro, fisheries
- employment
- education



PUTTING ONTARIO... AND THE NEED FOR AN ESD WORKING GROUP INTO PERSPECTIVE

Ontario is challenged by its relatively large population (over 12 million people representing 1/3 of Canada's population) and its geographic size (covering more than 1 million square kilometres - an area larger than France and Spain combined.)

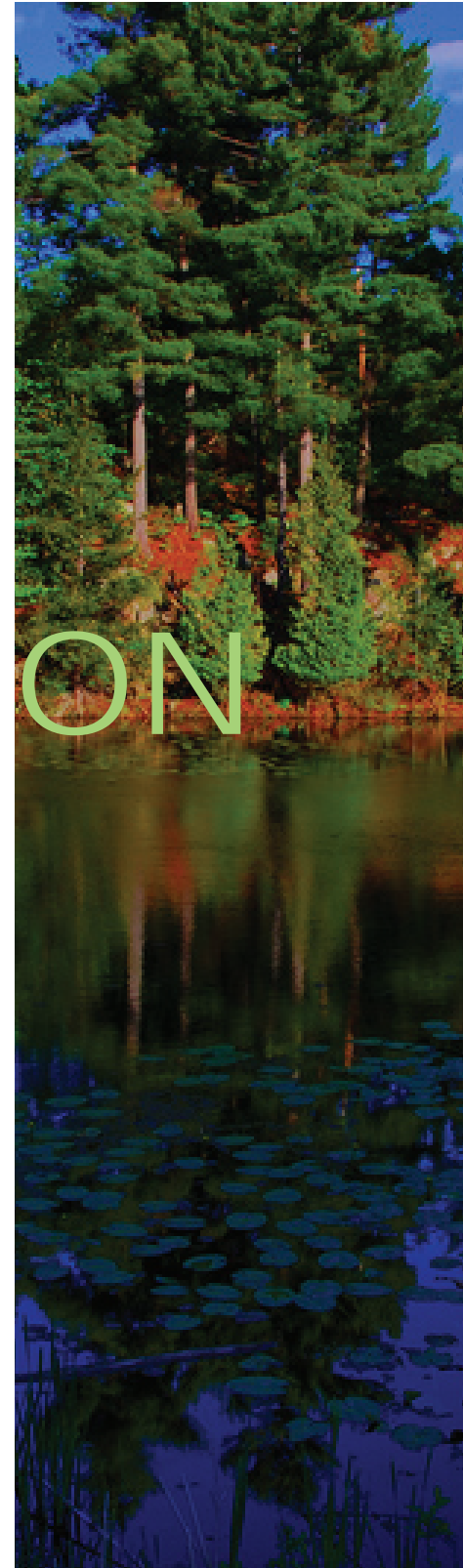
With more than 80 per cent of Ontarians living in cities, it's important to address urban issues relating to ESD as well as to recognize the huge cultural diversity of these populations. The province's rural population of more 2.4 people and its rural lands and natural resources also need to be recognized.

Ontario contains over half of Canada's highest quality (Class 1) agricultural land and its 56,000 farms account for almost one-quarter of all farm revenue in Canada. Similarly, Ontario contains 17 per cent of Canada's forests which represents 2 per cent of the world's forests. Ontario has more than 250,000 lakes and countless rivers and streams, which hold a huge amount of the world's freshwater.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

EASO functions as a strategic network of stakeholders and government representatives who are all working towards Education for Sustainable Development. EASO has 20 core participants who are responsible for outreach not only within their own organizations but within their networks. Our wider membership consists of more than 70 organizations.

The active subcommittees in EASO work on program development, networking and supporting other EASO initiatives. There are five main subcommittees; however, members are welcome to create their own initiatives.





SUBCOMMITTEES

Formal Education is learning which occurs in the structured educational system.

EASO's formal education subcommittee works to support the implementation of the Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future report. The subcommittee addresses policy by engaging in curriculum policy review processes and supporting enhancement of Ministry of Education documents by bringing an ESD perspective. It also works with all Teacher Affiliates to create professional development opportunities for teachers.

Informal / Non-formal Education is any learning which occurs outside of planned or organized education activities, e.g. cultural events, media. Non-formal education is any organized education activity which takes place outside the formal school system, i.e. corporate training, scouts.

EASO's informal/non-formal subcommittee identifies challenges and opportunities to move toward sustainability, as well as provides inspirational case studies of progress towards a "culture of sustainability".

Biodiversity Education & Awareness Network (BEAN) aims to encourage and strengthen education and awareness programs about the importance of biodiversity and causes of biodiversity loss, as well as its protection and sustainable use. BEAN currently engages people from many different organizations representing formal education, NGOs, industry, government and Aboriginal peoples. It reports both to EASO and the Ontario Biodiversity Council, where it serves as the Education and Awareness Task Team.

Communications subcommittee works to promote EASO, ESD, and the UN Decade of ESD, throughout Ontario by utilizing print, media, and Internet communications. The Communications subcommittee works to create proposals, grants, power points, op-eds, brochures, and articles for EASO.

Fundraising subcommittee raises funds to maintain and enhance EASO's operations.

EASO will:

1. create an expectation that all relevant policy, regulatory and operational frameworks support sustainability education;
2. lead in establishing strategic collaborations among governments, education sector leaders, business, NGOs and community groups to leverage sustainability education;
3. establish a process for assessing formal, non-formal and informal learning/ education sectors, and for reporting to appropriate provincial, national and UN bodies;
4. equip stakeholders with the competence, education tools and materials to be agents of change related to sustainability;
5. ensure a viable governance structure, sustainable processes and adequate funding and resources for EASO.



INITIATIVES SINCE 2006

- ESD Networking Forum -- More than 180 individuals attended this event held in September, 2006. Sponsored by EASO and Toronto Regional Centre for Expertise on ESD (Toronto-RCE), this Forum was an opportunity to explore opportunities for working together to enhance education for sustainability.
- Curriculum Development & Review -- In the review process EASO brings forward comments relating to sustainability education and engages stakeholders with relevant expertise to contribute to the review process. EASO has participated in the following curriculum reviews: Science & Technology Gr. 1 – 8, Science 9 – 12, Health & Physical Education Gr. 1 – 12, Social Sciences & Humanities Gr. 9 – 12 (currently engaged)
- The Environment Program Input — EASO provided input into the Ministry of Education’s proposed high school “Specialist High Skills Major” (SHSM) in The Environment. EASO also recommended that sustainability be used as the framework for all SHSM diploma programs.
- Environmental Education Review in Ontario - Pamela Schwartzberg, Executive Director of LSF and a member of EASO, was invited by the Ontario Minister of Education to sit on the Working Group on Environmental Education, chaired by Dr. Roberta Bondar. The Working Group submitted a report to the Minister entitled Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future with 32 recommendations on infusing environment and sustainability into Ontario schools. The Minister accepted all 32 recommendations and the EASO Formal Education Sub-Committee is now providing support for the implementation of this work.
- Ontario Biodiversity Strategy – Biodiversity Education Awareness Network produced an implementation plan for the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, which will set the tone for biodiversity education and awareness for the next three years.
- Teacher Professional Development – The Biodiversity Education Awareness Network and the Formal Education Sub-Committee collaborated with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Education, and the Ontario Teachers’ Federation to provide three professional development courses, which used biodiversity as a theme.
- Two New Task Groups – EASO has created a Climate Change Education Task Group to help shape development, implementation, and practice around climate change education. The Health & Sustainability Education Task Group brings together experts in Health Education to identify essential understandings needed in order to make good decisions related to health.